

1. a decrease in the reproductive potential of the commercial shrimp would produce a dramatic and significant reduction of the shrimp populations in the Gulf of Mexico; and
2. the maturation-reproductive phase is the most sensitive biological event in the life history of living organisms to changing environmental conditions."²⁷

TOURISM

The news media coverage at the time of the IXTOC I oil spill persuaded the public to stay away from the Texas beaches even before the oil actually hit the coast. Normally in August, the Texas beaches are prime tourist attractions bringing in millions of dollars in revenue. Through the efforts of the Federal, State and local governments, as well as the private sector, most of the oil was successfully removed from the beaches in time for the Labor Day weekend but the impression was already formed and the tourists did not come. Economic losses were heavy from Galveston to South Padre Island. South Padre Island was especially hard hit, according to Frank Hildebrand, executive director of the Texas Tourist Development Agency. Lost revenue there was between \$16-20 million. The middle coast also suffered severe damage. The upper coast around Galveston was affected adversely by oil from the ruptured tanker Burmah Agate.²⁸

Hotel/motel revenue from the calendar quarter ending September 30, 1979, estimated losses in room rentals for the period was 25%. The loss in revenue was incurred during the last three weeks in August. The oil spill and the resulting publicity caused occupancy to drop from 100% to less than 30%, according to Ralph Thompson, executive vice president of the South Padre Island Tourist Bureau.²⁹

The long term effects of the oil spill and the publicity it generated has not yet been determined. As long as the IXTOC I well remains uncapped the beaches of Texas could once again become polluted this spring when the currents turn north again. The economic losses would even be more substantial because an entire tourist season could be affected rather than just a three week period.